

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (currently amended): A container for ~~use in sterilizing an object~~ sterilizing an object, the container adapted to receive the object, the container having a first end having an opening to allow positioning of the object in the container, a second end located generally opposite the first end and closure means for closing the opening in the first end, said closure means comprising a vapor permeable sterility barrier, and wherein at least a portion of the container is ~~adapted to be collapsed or deformed whereby~~ collapsible or deformable to relatively move the first end and the second end are moved relatively towards each other to extend the object towards the opening in the first end.
2. (canceled)
3. (currently amended): A container as claimed in claim ~~2~~ 1 wherein the closure means comprises a ~~vapour~~ vapor permeable closure for affixing to a rim of the opening.
4. (currently amended): A container as claimed in claim 3 wherein the ~~vapour~~ vapor permeable ~~closure~~ sterility barrier comprises a peel paper or a ~~vapour~~ vapor permeable membrane.
5. (currently amended): A container as claimed in claim ~~2~~ 1 wherein the closure means comprises a lid or cap having a ~~vapour~~ vapor permeable ~~portion~~ sterility barrier.
6. (currently amended): A container as claimed in claim 5 wherein the lid or cap comprises an annular member having a flange depending therefrom, said flange having interengaging means for engaging with corresponding interengaging means on the container to thereby

hold the lid or cap on the container, and a ~~vapour~~vapor permeable ~~member~~sterility barrier spanning an opening in the annular member.

7. (currently amended): A container as claimed in claim ~~6~~5 wherein the lid or cap is a tamper-proof or tamper-evident lid or cap.

8. (previously presented): A container as claimed in claim 1 wherein the collapsible or deformable portion comprises a fluted or corrugated portion.

9. (previously presented): A container as claimed in claim 1 wherein the container is relatively enlarged at the first end.

10. (previously presented): A container as claimed in claim 1 wherein the second end of the container comprises a closed end.

11. (previously presented): A container as claimed in claim 1 wherein the second end is closed by a vapor permeable means.

12. (previously presented): A container as claimed in claim 1 wherein the collapsible or deformable portion is produced from a relatively rigid material.

13. (previously presented): A container as claimed in claim 1 comprising a first portion and a second portion joined together to form the container.

14. (original): A container as claimed in claim 13 wherein the first portion includes the deformable or collapsible portion.

15. (original): A container as claimed in claim 13 wherein the second portion includes the deformable or collapsible portion.

16. (original): A container as claimed in claim 13 wherein the first portion and the second portion each contain a deformable or collapsible portion.

17. (currently amended): A container as claimed in claim 1 for use in sterilizing ~~an endoscopic telescope~~ medical equipment comprising an elongated part for receiving ~~a barrel of an endoscopic telescope~~ said medical equipment and an enlarged part depending from the elongated part.

18. (original): A container as claimed in claim 17 wherein the elongated part includes the collapsible or deformed portion.

19. (previously presented): A container as claimed in claim 18 comprising a first part and a second, elongated part joined to the first part, the first part being of relatively enlarged diameter with respect to the elongated part.

20. (original): A container as claimed in claim 19 wherein the first part includes an outwardly projecting part that fits relatively snugly with the second, elongated part such that the outwardly projecting part of the first part overlaps with at least some of the second, elongated part.

21. (original): A container as claimed in claim 20 wherein the second part has an open end for receiving the outwardly extending part of the first part and a closed end, said closed end comprising the second end of the container.

22. (previously presented): A container as claimed in claim 21 wherein the first part has an open end in the outwardly extending part through which a barrel of an endoscopic telescope can pass and a large opening in the enlarged diameter portion.

23. (currently amended): A container for ~~use in~~ sterilizing an object, ~~the container adapted to receive the object,~~ the container having an internal volume for receiving the object, ~~and an~~ opening through which the object can be inserted into the container, and closure means for closing the opening, said closure means comprising a vapor permeable sterility barrier, characterized in that the container is adapted to be separated into at least two parts ~~has a~~ first end and a second end and a portion between the first and second ends that is breakable to enable separation of the container into at least two parts, thereby ~~to thereby~~ expose the object.

24. (canceled)

25. (currently amended): A container as claimed in claim ~~24~~23 wherein the breakable portion comprises one or more lines of weaknesses or a portion made of a low-breaking point material.

26. (canceled)

27. (currently amended): A container as claimed in claim ~~26~~23 wherein the closure means is a tamper proof or tamper evident closure.

28-29. (canceled)

30. (previously presented) A container as claimed in claim 23 further comprising a sheet-like material adapted to drape over the object upon removal of the object.

31. (original): A container as claimed in claim 30 wherein the sheet-like material is mounted to the inside of the container.

32. (original): A container as claimed in claim 30 wherein the sheet-like material is mounted to a closure means.

33. (currently amended): A container as claimed in claim ~~32~~30 wherein the sheet-like material is a sheet of gauze or other medical fabric.

34. (original): A container as claimed in claim 1 wherein the deformable or collapsible portion comprises a portion of the container at or adjacent to the first end of the container which is adapted to fold downwardly upon the container.

35. (currently amended): A method for sterilizing an object comprising placing the object into a container, the container having an opening through which the object is inserted, the container having first and second ends and at least a portion which is ~~adapted to be deformed or collapsed,~~ deformable or collapsible by moving a first end of the container relatively towards a second end of the container, closing the opening with a ~~vapour~~vapor permeable ~~closure~~ sterility barrier and placing the container in a sterilizing environment for sufficient time to sterilize the object.

36. (canceled)

37. (currently amended): A method as claimed in claim 35 wherein the object is removed from the container by removing the vapor permeable sterility barrier and collapsing or deforming the collapsible or deformable portion by relatively moving a first end of the container and a second end of the container toward each other to thereby reduce an inner volume of the container ~~and force the object to break open the vapor permeable closure and extend the object at least partly out of the container.~~

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Amendment dated February 10, 2004
Reply to Office action of October 8, 2003

38. (new): A container as claimed in claim 1, wherein said vapor permeable sterility barrier is breakable such that collapsing or deforming said collapsible or deformable portion causes the object to break through said sterility barrier for removal.

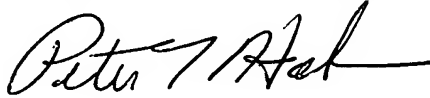
39. (new): A container as claimed in claim 17, wherein the medical equipment comprises a barrel of an endoscopic telescope.

40. (new): A method for sterilizing an object comprising placing the object into a container, the container having an opening through which the object is inserted, the container having first and second ends and at least a portion which is deformable or collapsible by relatively moving a first end of the container and a second end of the container toward each other, closing the opening with a vapor permeable sterility barrier and placing the container in a sterilizing environment for sufficient time to sterilize the object, wherein the object is removed from the container by collapsing or deforming the collapsible portion to thereby reduce an inner volume of the container and force the object to break open the vapor permeable sterility barrier and extend at least partly out of the container.

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Respectfully submitted,

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter T. Holsen", written in a cursive style.

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